

Gateway No Way – Planning Challenges for Freight in Metropolitan Canada

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Abstract

Canada's major cities function as major economic engines, generating tremendous amounts of freight transportation activity. Much of this activity is internally oriented, but significant portions are oriented externally as part of interregional logistic activity. Port cities like Vancouver are contending with increasing container activity while in Toronto, the focus is largely on truck traffic, with daily volumes exceeding 150 to 300,000 trucks at locations on some of North America's busiest freeways. A continual challenge remains effectively planning – in terms of the transportation and land use systems – in this context. How do these cities incorporate and address the freight transportation sector in their planning?

The focus in this paper is on exploring issues related to this question in light of a number of recent initiatives. The role of the Federal government has taken on new prominence in light of recent "Gateway and Corridor" funding initiatives. This has in part been promoted on the basis of "national benefits", yet, opposition at the local level has quickly emerged. The Provincial government, in the case of Toronto, has forwarded a strategic transportation plan in which freight movement figures prominently, often in conjunction with new and controversial highway investments. Added to the mix in both cases, is the role of freight industry groups or "gateway councils". These groups function as representatives for the freight community in consultations and policy discussions. The points of conflict with respect to land use and transportation planning and potential approaches to resolution are highlighted in an exploration of selected cities. Of particular interest is the interplay between the many stakeholders and the identification of opportunities for working towards solutions.

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